

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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## Former Union City Zoning Board Member Admits Extorting \$20,000 Bribe from Building Contractor

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(More)

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TRENTON – A former member of the Union City Board of Adjustment pleaded guilty today to accepting more than \$20,000 in corrupt cash payments from a contractor in exchange for the promise of official favors, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

John Medina, 38, of North Bergen, admitted accepting the corrupt cash payments from a contractor who was having difficulty obtaining permit renewals necessary for the construction of a multi-use, six-story building on Summit Avenue in Union City.

Medina pleaded guilty to a one-count Information before U.S. District Judge Garrett E. Brown, Jr. The Information charges Medina with extortion under color of official right, which carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe.

Today was Medina's first appearance in court in connection with the corruption investigation. Judge Brown released him on a \$100,000 bond pending sentencing scheduled for Sept. 22.

Between 2002 and January 2005, Medina was a member of the Board of Adjustment of Union City, for which he considered various plans for building and development in Union City. As a member of the zoning board he assisted in the approval of development and construction that met the criteria of municipal ordinances and state law.

In January 2005, Medina met with the contractor in the vicinity of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Summit and Central Avenues. Medina admitted that at the meeting, he solicited and demanded a sum of \$35,000 from the individual, ultimately agreeing to accept approximately \$20,000.

Medina admitted that, in exchange for the corrupt cash payments, he would make it easier for the building project during its inspection by Union City authorities and expedite the renewal of permits for the project. At the meeting, Medina agreed to accept the corrupt payment in installments of either four, \$5,000 payments or two, \$10,000 payments.

Medina also said that he intended to share the cash payments with another individual involved in the extortion scheme.

Medina admitted that he had held himself out as a close associate of other supervisory personnel in Union City government who could assist the contractor. Medina also told the contractor that he wanted to be the "real estate person" involved in identifying individuals to rent space in the building.

The investigation is continuing.

Medina is also employed by the Union City Board of Education as an attendance and

truant officer at Emerson High School during about the same time he was a member of the zoning board.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading today's guilty plea. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe of the U.S. Attorney's Special Prosecution's Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Candace Hom, Esq., federal Public Defender's Office